

way of affirming traditional values in a climate of rapid social change. One such book features Stalin reincarnated as a pig about to be slaughtered in the abattoir. These spirit-writing cults would compare interestingly with the US channelling groups examined by the anthropologist Michael F. Brown (*The Channeling Zone. American Spirituality in an Anxious Age.* Cambridge 1997).

Historian Joseph Tse-Hei Lee's chapter is on the politics of conversion to Christianity in rural Chaozhou in southern China in the late 19th century. In this highly militarized region with frequent intervillage/lineage fights, many communities appealed to the power and influence of Western missionaries for extra leverage, spurring mass conversions that followed lines of kin and lineage loyalty and rivalry. One case study shows how two rival sublineages both converted to Christianity, but one to Scottish Presbyterian and the other to American Baptist churches respectively.

Historian Paul R. Katz's piece is on the post-Mao revival of popular religious festivals in Pucheng, a small rural town of about 7,000 inhabitants in Zhejiang Province. Like many other locales in China, Pucheng has a rich popular religious tradition, with temples dedicated to various deities, many of which have been revived. Katz focusses on the ritual competition and rivalry between the two prominent factions in Pucheng: the fishing/commercial community of West Gate and the agricultural community of East Gate. Each faction has a number of temples dedicated to the same deity, Duke Yan, but they compete fiercely to outdo each other in lavishness of their processions, rites, performances, and banquets, which Katz interprets as the conversion of wealth into symbolic capital as well as the recreation of communal identities. One is reminded of the annual, early-Spring, ritualized rock fight in the town of Lugang described by the anthropologist Donald DeGlopper (*Lukang. Commerce and Community in a Chinese City.* Albany 1995), in which members of different lineage groups face each other off and throw rocks at one another, and blood spilled is seen as bringing good fortune for the communities.

Historian Michael Szonyi examines a ghost cult centered on a woman named Wang Yulan on Jinmen (Quemoy, a small island off the coast of Xiamen of Fujian Province). Jinmen was a heavily militarized Cold War flashpoint, one of the frontier zones between the Communist Block and the anti-Communist "Free World" ever since the retreat of the Nationalists to Taiwan. Szonyi shows how ordinary villagers, Nationalist soldiers and officers, and much later tourists from Taiwan invest divergent meanings onto the woman and her cult, revealing intricate interactions between geopolitics and Chinese religiosity.

Scholar of Chinese religion Eric Reinders's chapter is an interesting symbolic analysis of the meanings given to certain postures signifying obeisance and disobedience, using the cases of the non-bowing of Buddhist monks (to laity including the emperor, parents, and ancestors) and Protestants, the ideology of postural erectness of the latter preventing them from bowing to any-

one. Such insistence on correct postures illustrates the crucial link between ritual uses of the body and religious identities. The lone non-China piece in the volume is on the development of Indian Buddhist esoteric rituals by Vesna A. Wallace, a specialist of South Asian religions. Highly informative, its focus on liturgical, doctrinal, and symbolic aspects contrasts sharply with the other essays' more sociopolitical orientations.

In the Epilogue the editors recount their travel-cum-fieldwork peregrinations in East Asia (Taiwan, China, Korea, Okinawa) and relate their findings with parallel processes in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (e.g., conversion to Christianity, ritual change, the revitalization of indigenous knowledge, etc.). Not to take the considerable merits away from the volume, but the book has the sloppiest and bizarrist index I have ever seen. While most of the index items seem straightforward, there are, inexplicably, separate entries for "bow" and "bowing"; "Communist" and "Communists"; "cult" and "cults"; "Daoists" and "Taoists"; "deities," "deity," and "gods"; "festival" and "festivals"; "ghost" and "ghosts"; "lineage" and "lineages"; "medium" and "mediums"; "performance" and "performances"; "Presbyterian" and "Presbyterians"; "ritual" and "rituals"; "rupture" and "ruptures"; "sacrifice," "sacrifices," and "sacrificial ceremony"; "song" and "songs"; "Song" and "Song dynasty"; "tradition," "traditional," and "traditions." Most bizarrely, the entry "Yan" (glossed as "hatred") points to mentions of a cited Chinese scholar surnamed Yan, the bibliographic entry of his cited work (both in Lee's chapter), a Chinese deity called Duke Yan (Katz), a Chinese girl whose given name is Yan (only here meaning "hatred") (Szonyi), and another deity channelled through spirit writing in Taiwan called Yan Yuan Fuzi (Clart). There are also no subentries for entries with far too numerous indexed pages (there are scores of indexed pages for "body," "China," "community," "cult(s)," "deity/deities," "history," "identity," "performance(s)," "power," "state," "Taiwan," "temples," not to mention "religion" and "ritual(s)"). As an important scholarly apparatus, the index certainly deserves more attention and care.

Adam Yuet Chau

Taylor, Philip: *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta. Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery.* Singapore: NUS Press; Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007. 313 pp. ISBN 978-9971-69-361-9; ISBN 978-87-7694-009-6. Price: £ 14.99

In this welcome study, Taylor adds substantially to the growing interest in the Cham Muslims of the lower Mekong delta in Southern Vietnam. The Cham Muslims are a tiny minority living in the borderland where the Mekong River flows from Cambodia into Vietnam. Taylor builds on the existing ethnography on the Cham, but adds an innovative perspective of the Cham community by providing a picture of a minority in motion that makes creative use of cultural, spatial, and economic resources to secure their survival in a

hostile environment. Based on long-term visits and anthropological fieldwork, this is the most complete study on the Cham since Nakamura's PhD.

Living in a very plural community that is characterized by steady interaction between Cham, Kinh, and Khmer communities, the Cham are regarded by the Vietnamese state in the centre as remote and uncivilized. In a region where Buddhism and spirit beliefs are dominating the religious landscape, the Cham stand out by sticking to Islam, speaking another language, and by specializing in trade. Taylor shows in a historical longue durée perspective that the Cham, far from being remote, are a very cosmopolitan group that had to defend themselves against the odds of history, and especially against the assimilation efforts of a repressive and centralizing communist state. Finding an economic niche in the market, the Cham use their trade and their Islamic networks as well as their contacts with the Diaspora to succeed in trade.

In the first chapter, Taylor looks into the creating myths of the Cham Muslim community and the nostalgia of a lost kingdom. By reproducing the stories of origin, the Cham create a master-narrative that is essential to their cultural identity and that gives meaning to the locality and community of the Cham beyond the border of the Vietnamese nation. The chapter on Islam takes an ambitious tour de force and shows that far from being the receptor only of religious ideas, the Cham themselves were the motor of proselytizing Islam in the region, benefiting from their networks in Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Southern Thailand, and Mecca. The chapter shows that the travel is integral to the reproduction of Cham locality and identity at home. In the next chapter, Taylor shows that while the Cham are faithful Muslims, they are also very active spirit believers. In this interesting chapter, we also learn that the Cham share most of the spirit beliefs with their neighbouring communities. Apart from malevolent spirits, it would be interesting to know more about the value of ancestors. Also, the two chapters of Islam and spirit beliefs could be better linked to show how Islam has localized and has been accommodated to local ideas. Chapter four and five are particularly strong and well-researched. In them, Taylor shows how the Cham have responded to increasing political pressure and economic marginalization by migrating and by specializing in trade. Thus, the picture of a very mobile community is emerging that uses contacts in the Diaspora as well as the Islamic networks for survival and reproduction. The last chapter gives an overview of the political agency of the Cham and their adjustment to the assimilation policy of the Vietnamese state.

Taylor emphasizes the location of the Cham community in the plural spaces of the Mekong delta, but remains silent on the cross-border transnational spaces of the Vietnamese and Cambodian Cham. Many Cham fled the persecution of the Khmer Rouge to neighbouring Vietnam. The cross-border connections might be another resource of the Cham to counter their marginalization in the imagined community of the Vietnamese nation.

Working in Cambodia, Agnès de Féo has shown in her marvellous film "Un Islam insolite" that the Cham bani (son of the prophet), living on the South-East coast in the provinces of Ninh Thuận and Binh Thuận, distinguish themselves from mainstream Islam in very important ways. The transgressions of the Cham bani do not show that the Cham are not faithful Muslims (what they surely are), but show how Islam is accommodated in the local society, thereby being transformed according to the needs and value-ideas of the local community (cf., A. d. Féo, *Transgressions de l'Islam au Vietnam. Les Cahiers de l'Orient* 83/3.2006: 133–142).

Being a matrilineal society, women play a very important role inside and outside the mosque and the daughter inherits the house. The pure Cham pray once a week instead of 5 times a day. Many ritual elements were handed down from Brahmanism and Hinduism and persisted in Islam. Significantly, Cham were not converted to Islam, but remained Brahmans and Hindu. The Brahman and Muslim Cham, however, remained in touch and see themselves as male and female sides of the same culture. In Taylor's account, Islam is one of the cornerstones of Cham identity. Also, the interaction of the Cham with the neighbouring community is not entirely clear. It would be interesting to know if common spirit beliefs or cosmologies allow for inter-marriage and how inter-marriage is resolved. If Taylor had included the ambiguity of Cham Muslim identity between Brahmanism/Hinduism, spirit beliefs, and Islam, he would have perhaps discovered more common ground between the Cham community and other communities in the plural spaces of the Mekong delta. In this context, the impact of Islamic revitalization movements is also very crucial. We know from Cambodia that the Tabligh Jama'at, coming from North India, made big inroads and split the Cambodian Cham community into syncretic and orthodox Muslims. Taylor is right in rejecting the alarmist tones of Vietnamese state representatives, but I think from my own research that the agency of Islamic mission needs careful exploration. In particular, the Tabligh Jama'at reject the rituals relating to spirit beliefs, healing, and Brahman or Hindu heritage. In joining the Tabligh Jama'at, the Cham, like other Muslim minorities, loose in fact their local cultural identity and become more mainstream Muslims according to global ideologies.

This being said, the study remains an exemplary and lively exploration that is taking sympathetic sides with a marginalized people who counter their marginalization by using available sources creatively.

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Thiessen, Ilká: *Waiting for Macedonia. Identity in a Changing World.* Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007. 206 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55111-719-5. Price: C\$ 26.95

The title of Ilka Thiessen's Macedonia monograph, although derived from a poem titled "T'ga za Jug" (Longing for the South), is more suggestive of Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." Little more needs to be said about